

Profile of the Reverend Loretta P. Smith-Koffi

Born and raised in Newark, NJ, Reverend Loretta P. Smith-Koffi, was predestined to serve the community in which she grew up. Serving as senior pastor of Zion Church for the past 13 years, Reverend Koffi has dedicated her life to educating a community full of "street torn souls" She believes that "there is no ministry without education. The two go hand-in-hand. The way out, says Koffi, is through education. If you've never been exposed to anything different, you'll never know that there are differences, therefore, you'll never want anything different." Although she lives in Barnegat, NJ with her husband, Statesman Bernard Koffi and their two children, Emmanuel and Mica and their God family, Jacqueline and Nahor, Newark has always been in her heart. As a result of her love, she is working in a plethora of areas to revitalize a broken and forgotten city. After her education in the Newark Public School system, Reverend Koffi then moved on to Kean College and graduated in 1979 with a degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Urban Education. In 1985, she moved forward to Drew University where she then received her Masters of Divinity in Urban Ministry.

She has been instrumentally involved with several literacy programs in Newark, in which she founded, to provide the extra help that is so desperately needed to educate the people. She has a firm hand in service to her community.

At the present time, Reverend Koffi is working full steam ahead as the director and founder of Hope Academy an Alternative Christian High School at Zion Church for those who want the education and moral standards back together where they belong. Hope Academy is just one of many services that are available to the public. Along with the high school, Zion Church offers a soup kitchen, food and clothing distributions, free tutorial program, counseling, ministry training, young mens and youth ministries and so much more.

Zion Church has just begun a celebration to commemorate its 100 year anniversary and Reverend Koffi is very pleased and excited about being a part of something so outstanding and God driven. Numerous events are being planned from now until July 1998 and beyond to mark this historical event. Zion Church is also going to be historicalized by the city of Newark.